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When to Furnish Aid for a Freedom Fighter

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WASHINGTON

In 1821 John Quincy Adams, in a famous Fourth of July address, urged his fellow Americans to be friends of freedom everywhere but not to go abroad "in search of monsters to destroy."

In the last few weeks Washington politicians in both parties have seemed determined to stand Adams' advice on its head: They want us to prove that we are a friend of freedom by acting to destroy all the monsters through a program of supporting right-wing efforts to overthrow left-wing governments.

But this is a disastrous road already well-traveled during the 1950s, a "liberation policy" enunciated during the Dwight D. Eisenhower presidential campaign of 1952. "We will abandon the policy of containment and will actively develop hope and resistance spirit within the captive peoples," announced the next secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. The United States would "unleash" its friends to fight the oppression of communism. On March 12, 1955, the Eisenhower Administration issued a secret directive authorizing the Central Intelligence Agency "to the extent practicable in areas dominated or threatened by international communism, [to] develop underground resistance and facilitate covert and guerrilla operations." Then little more than a year later, almost certainly for internal reasons and not because of any CIA success, Poland and Hungary did rise up.

The United States found, to its humiliation, that it could do nothing. The Hungarian freedom fighters frantically radioed for help. None came. Secretary of State Dulles then publicly declared that the United States could not assist the Hungarians because that would require American troops and such a move "would precipitate a full-scale world war."

Eisenhower's policy of direct action against communist states was a tragic mistake that provided hard-liners throughout the Warsaw Pact with a plausible external reason to entrench the

most brutal forms of repression in Eastern Europe for another decade. Yet, that history notwithstanding, pressure is mounting in Washington for the United States to develop a "Reagan Doctrine" that would call on this country to work to overthrow pro-Soviet governments throughout the world.

Richard L. Armitage, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, in early May informed the subcommittee on foreign operations of the Senate Committee on Appropriations that the "enemy of our enemy will be assured of our friendship if he shares our values in his opposition to our enemy." Sen. Bob Kasten (R-Wis.), the subcommittee chairman, has suggested giving the President an unrestricted "rebel fund" to fund insurgents he finds worthy of support.

The Democrats are also getting in on the act. The House of Representatives, controlled by the Democrats, recently reversed its earlier decision to deny the Administration money to fund the effort by the *contras* to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Asia subcommittee, has proposed an amendment that would provide \$5 million in funding for the non-communist insurgents in Cambodia.

Something like a political stampede is taking place within Washington policy circles. The last time this type of political movement swept Washington the country got in a great deal of trouble abroad. How to prevent this from happening again?

Virtually no one opposes assistance to Afghan resistance groups struggling against the brutal Soviet occupation of their country. Yet the Administration is less than enthusiastic about efforts by Solarz to provide direct U.S. aid to the insurgents in Cambodia and many Democrats are opposed to the Administration's desire to provide direct aid to the *contras* in Nicaragua. From these differences

should flow the following guidelines:

First, domestic support will be high if an administration is able to help the victims of direct aggression. The *contras* in Nicaragua are not fighting a foreign invader. The Khmer Rouge attacked Vietnam before the latter invaded Cambodia. The Afghans are victims of Soviet aggression.

Second, international support will be high if U.S. policy is seen in support of regional efforts to deal with an act of aggression. The Reagan Administration is right to be concerned about Democratic efforts to provide direct assistance to the Khmer resistance. This is a fight of greatest concern to China and the Assn. of Southeast Asian Nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand). They have enough resources to support whatever degree of resistance the Khmer people are willing to undertake.

Third, U.S. policy is less likely to cause us trouble if national interests are seen as more important than partisan ideology. The goal should not be to look for undemocratic governments to overthrow but to identify interests compelling enough to defend. America needs cudgels, not crusades. Even then, *Realpolitik* must be tempered by morality or at some point domestic support will disappear. It is right to assist Afghans trying to regain control of their own country. It is immoral to fund Afghan insurgents simply for the purpose of tying the Soviets down in a bloody insurgency or fighting till the last Afghan.

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